

Coffeeville Hotel
South side Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad
Tract 1617
Coffeeville
Yalbbusha County
Mississippi

HABS No. MS-215

HABS
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

COFFEEVILLE HOTEL

HABS No. MS-215

Location: Coffeeville, Yalobusha County, Mississippi; Tract 1617.
The Hotel is located immediately southeast of the Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad, which separates the site from the central business district. Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM): Zone 16; Easting 253 030; Northing 37 62 025.

Present Owner: Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers, P. O. Box 60,
Vicksburg, MS. 39180

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Vacant; demolition, repair, or relocation are currently under consideration.

Significance: From 1906 until World War II, the Coffeeville Hotel played an important role in the business life of the town of Coffeeville. For over seventy-five years it has been a local landmark due to its prominent location and distinctive architectural design.

From the turn of the century until World War II, Coffeeville was the "turn around" point for the engineers and crews of the Illinois Central Railroad. In addition, the town was the county seat of Yalobusha County and as such was a center of legal and commercial activity in this agricultural region. The Coffeeville Hotel, therefore, provided room and board for railroad men, passengers, salesmen, and visiting professionals. Its rooms were used by the local undertaker for the display of caskets arriving by train, and by travelling salesmen, or "drummers", for the display of their product samples. The dining room was frequently used by juries who were sent to the hotel by the judge for meals during court recesses. In addition, the hotel served as a social center for local businessmen, many of whom made it a temporary home while beginning their careers.

Architecturally, the hotel is a local landmark, given its prominent site and distinctive front facade and massing. Located adjacent to the railroad and directly opposite the central business district, the building is clearly visible from the center of town and dominates the view to the southeast from the main street.

The bold massing of the front facade, with its two-story columned portico framed by twin end bays, gives the building a simple yet striking dignity. While the detailing and finishes are not notable, the corner fireplaces are of interest. Taken as a whole, the hotel is a locally significant example of vernacular design executed with a certain charming naivete which speaks of its origins in the rural traditions of turn of the century north Mississippi.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1906
2. Original owner: W. H. Hamblet
3. Subsequent owners:
 - a. Mollie Hamblet Smith
 - b. Renna Smith Johnson (1937-1957)
 - c. Mildred Warren (1957-1980)
 - d. Vicksburg District, Corps of Engineers (1980-present)
4. Builder/Contractor: Hall (first name unknown) of Water Valley, MS.
5. Alterations: A rear porch, kitchen, serving room and servants' quarters which originally adjoined the southeast facade were removed in 1954. The original dining room was altered by the addition of a lunch counter. A separate, free-standing structure in the northeast yard, known as the "show room house", has been demolished. The tops of the existing chimneys were removed below the roof line when propane heat was installed, c.1942. The original downstairs hall was remodeled to include a new bathroom, c.1949.

- B. Historical Context: Constructed in 1906 for W. H. Hamblet of Coffeeville, the building was first known as the Hamblet Hotel. The name was changed to the Coffeeville Hotel by the subsequent owner, Hamblet's daughter, Mollie Hamblet Smith.

Between 1900 and 1950, the population of Coffeeville slowly increased from 467 to 739. During these years the hotel played a prominent role in the commercial life of the town by providing room and board for travellers as well as local businessmen. For the latter the hotel became a center for social activity.

Following World War II the importance of the Illinois Central Railroad declined and the hotel entered a period of decline. In 1957 the hotel was converted to use as a rooming house and ceased to be a focal point of the community. Since its acquisition by the Corps of Engineers in 1980, the building has been vacant.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Coffeeville Hotel is a two story, wood frame structure. The most distinguishing features are the wide, two-story portico on the front facade, and the two tower-like corner bays which frame the portico on both sides. Each of these is roofed with a four-sided hipped roof, crowned with a spherical pinnacle.

The interior contains no remarkable architectural features, although the beaded siding and ceiling and the corner fireplaces are of interest.

2. Condition of Fabric: The overall condition of the Hotel may be described as moderately deteriorated. The external wood clapboard is in bad repair and the mortar of the brick portions of the foundation are soft. The front portico is severely deteriorated, as are portions of the eaves and soffits. On the interior, there are several holes in the floors, walls, and ceilings caused by moisture damage. The second floor vibrates when walked upon, and sags in many areas. The attic structure sags, and there is evidence of roof leaks in several locations. In general, the structure of the floor and roof is undersized by modern building code standards.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 71 feet wide x 52 feet deep.
2. Foundations: Concrete slab on grade at front portico; brick and concrete block foundation walls and piers.
3. Walls: Wood frame with horizontal clapboard exterior siding.
4. Structural System, framing: The first and second floors are framed with 2" x 8" wood joists on 24" centers. The joists of the first floor are supported on 6" x 8" wood beams, spanning between the foundation piers. The roof framing consists of 2" x 6" joists at 24" centers, with 2" x 4" bracing. The attic floor is framed with 2" x 6" joists, 24" on center.
5. Porch: Two-story front portico with concrete slab on grade and four boxed wood columns.
6. Chimneys: Four brick chimney masses with double corner fireplaces in adjacent rooms. The tops of these chimneys have been removed below the roof surface.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: On the first floor of the portico, three doorways open to the exterior. Three additional doors open to the exterior on the ground floor of the rear facade. On the second floor, three doorways open onto the upper portico. All doors except for the double front door and a sliding interior door include transoms. The detailing is simple and undistinguished. In some cases, doors are glazed with stained glass.
 - b. Windows: All windows are double-hung, with nine-over-one or one-over-one sashes. Many of the windows have been covered with plywood to secure the building. The first floor contains a total of 14 windows; the second floor contains a total of 18.

8. Roof:
- a. Shape, covering: Except for the corner towers, the roof is hipped, sloping to all four sides. The corner bays are each emphasized by a separate pyramidal hipped roof, topped by a spherical pinnacle. The roof of the front portico is a shed type, sloping toward the front. The roofing material is galvanized sheet metal which has been repaired in spots with asphalt and with roll roofing.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: A simple overhanging cornice wraps the building at the roof line. There are no gutters or downspouts. The eave soffits are deteriorated in many locations.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans: (see drawings, Appendix B)
 - a. First floor: The plan is bilaterally symmetrical about a central hallway leading from the front door, which opens onto the portico, to the main stairway at the rear. On the northeast side of this hallway are a series of 14'-6" square rooms, used for rental to clients. At the north corner are two adjoining rooms formerly used as the "undertaker's suite". These were heated by two of the corner fireplaces, sharing a common chimney. Two other rooms at the south corner shared similar corner fireplaces.

To the southwest of the central hallway are two larger rooms, the westernmost containing a second stairway. This room originally served as the hotel lobby, and shares another corner fireplace with the square room at the west corner of the building. The second large room, at the south corner, was used as the dining room. Originally a kitchen wing and rear porch adjoined the the dining room to the southeast; these have been demolished. The dining room now contains a lunch counter added c.1957. In the east corner is a fireplace.

- b. Second Floor: A central hallway directly above that on the first floor divides the floor into two symmetrical halves and links the main stair at the southeast end with the upper portico on the front of the building. A secondary corridor runs perpendicular to this hallway and affords access to the 14'-6" square guest rooms. In addition, two rooms at the north and west corners are accessible from the ends of the portico. The corner fireplaces on the first floor are repeated in similar positions on this level. A toilet room and tub room are also provided adjacent to the secondary stair.
2. Stairways: The main stair is located at the southeast end of the main hallways on both floors. This stair is divided into two flights with an intermediate landing, and has wooden banisters and a newel post of standard, commercial millwork.

A second stair connects the lobby with the second floor hallway. This stair consists of straight run and features millwork similar to that of the main stair.

North

FRONT

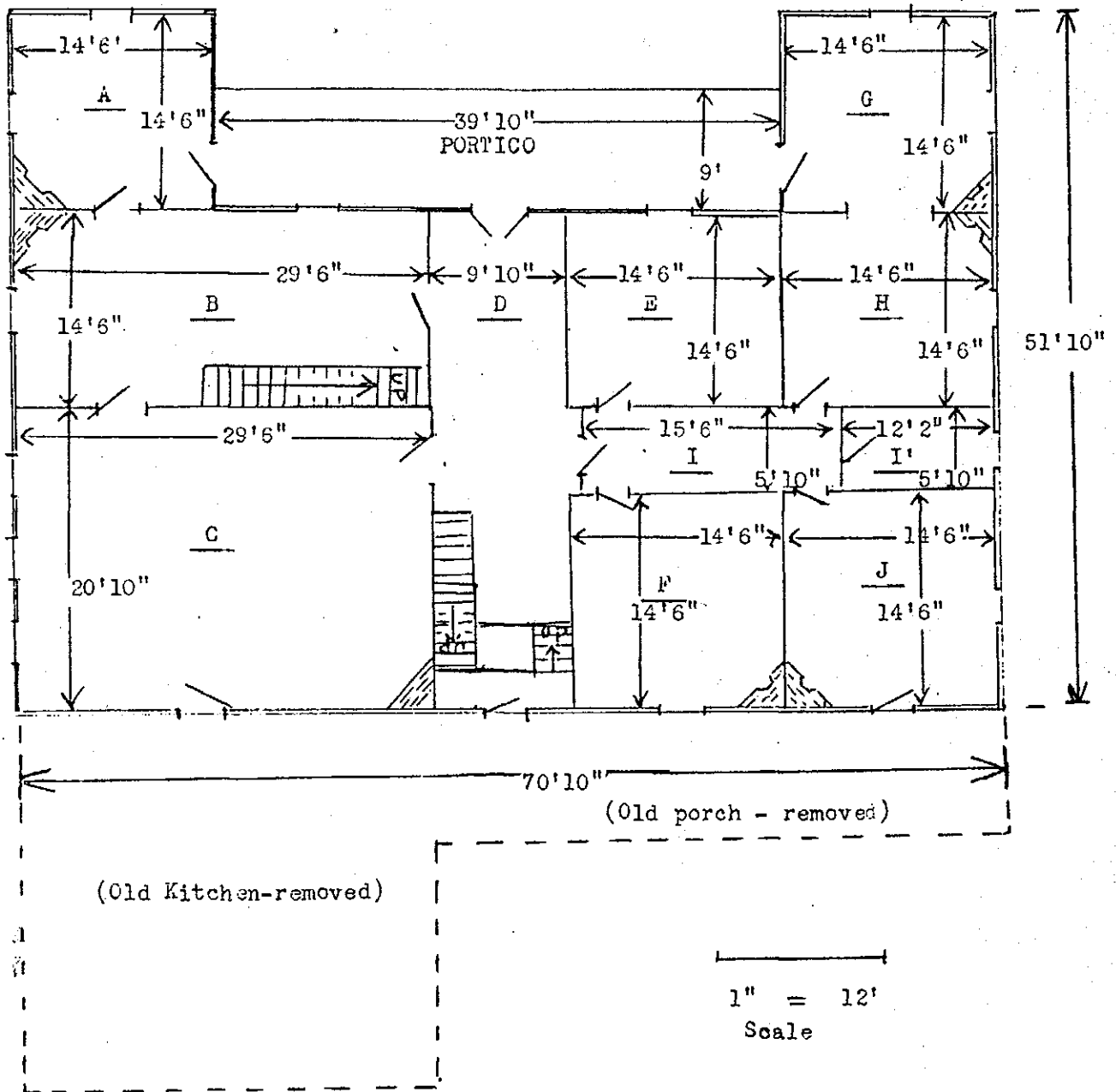
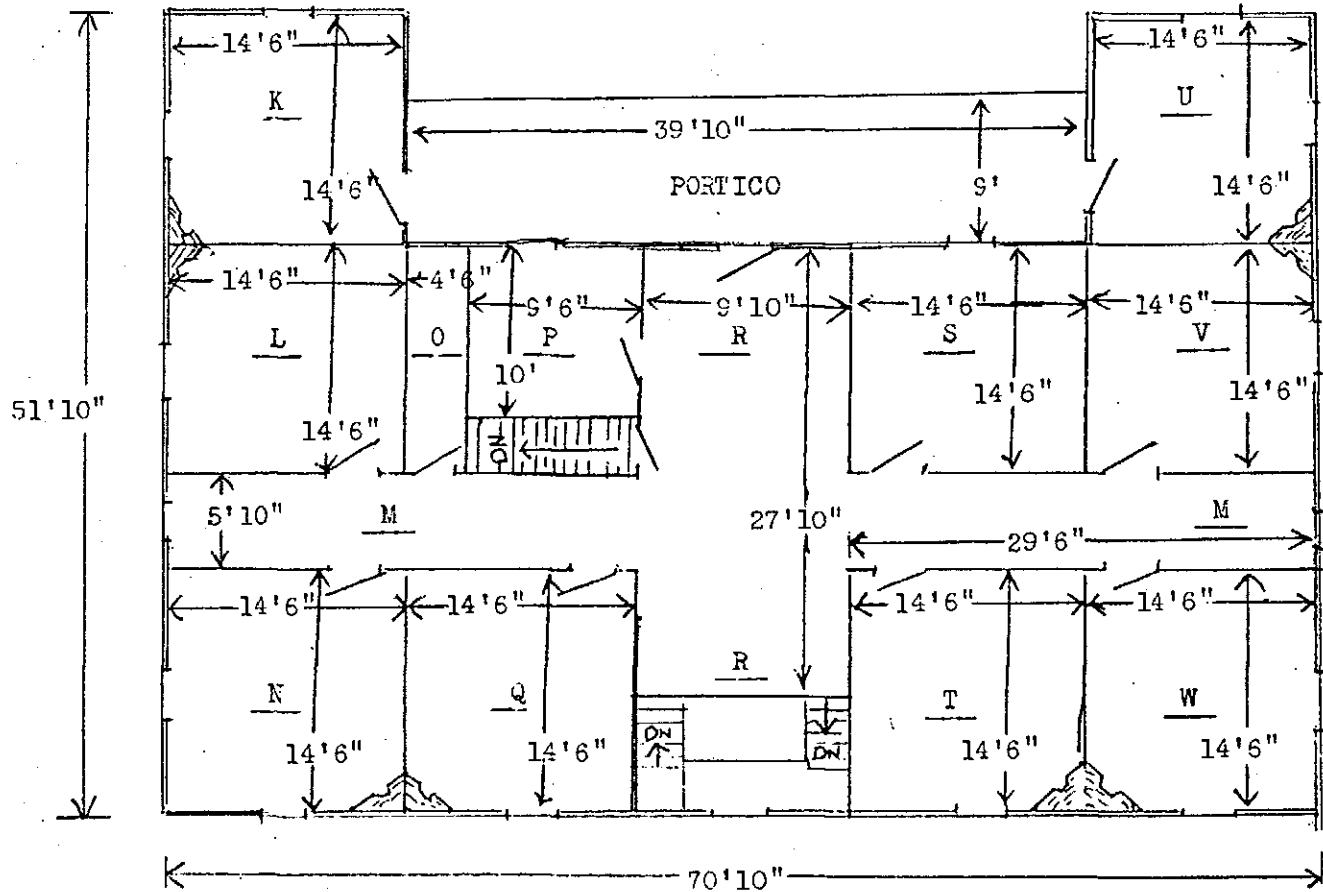
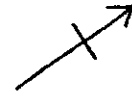


EXHIBIT 1
Lower Floor

North



1" = 12'
Scale

EXHIBIT 2

Upper Floor

drawings by Harry P. Owens

3. Flooring: All flooring consists of 1" x 4" tongue and groove pine boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Beaded 1" x 4" pine is used for both walls and ceilings. These boards run horizontally on all walls except in the dining room and central hallway of the first floor, where their direction is vertical to a height of approximately 30".
5. Doors: Interior doors are four panel wood doors with standard commercial hardware. Most have transoms above for cross ventilation. A sliding door connects the two rooms of the "undertaker's suite" at the north corner of the first floor. The main front door is double, with two glass lights above a wooden lower panel.
6. Decorative features and trim: Interior millwork consists of simple, commercial grade trim with no significant distinguishing characteristics.
7. Hardware: Standard commercial type with simple ornamentation.
8. Mechanical equipment: Heating, which was originally provided by fireplace, was converted to propane gas space heaters c.1942. There is no air conditioning.

Lighting is provided by electric lights suspended from the ceilings. In the rental rooms there are single bare bulbs. In the public rooms of the first floor, however, four-bulb brass fixtures are provided.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The hotel is situated in the center of Coffeeville directly east of the main business district, but separated by the Illinois Central and Gulf Railroad. The hotel faces northwest, toward the railroad and the business district beyond. To the rear is formerly cultivated land, although the Corps of Engineers is currently engaged in site improvements for flood control purposes.
2. Outbuildings: A former outbuilding located to the northeast, known as the "showroom house", has been demolished.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: Unavailable for this report; said to be in the possession of Mrs. Mildred Warren of Coffeeville.
- B. Bibliography:
 1. Owens, Harry P., "Report on the Coffeeville Hotel and Other Tracts Owned by the United States Army, Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg District".
- C. Prepared by: James Williamson AIA, James Williamson/Carl Awsumb/Architects, Memphis, Tennessee, 1982.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

- A. Federal Agency Involved: Department of the Army, Vicksburg District,
Corps of Engineers, P. O. Box 60, Vicksburg. MS 39180.
- B. Persons Participating in Documentation:
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